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The PKI and the Sino-Soviet Dispute

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Summary

1. The PKI, reminiscently of Mao Tse-tung's "neutral, leaning to one side," has, for a variety of motives adopted positions on most of the key issues of the Sino-Soviet dispute paralleling those of the Chinese Communists. To some extent these issues have become involved in intra-party maneuvers for power. Should the argument between the CPSU and the CPC come to the point of an open break, with other parties forced to make a final commitment, the freedom to temporize and maneuver which the PKI has exploited would probably be lost and the weight of all the factors involved makes it probable that the PKI turn would be to the Chinese rather than the Soviet side. The outcome of the internal conflict in the PKI which may be determined at the Ninth Congress will play a significant part in any such decisions.

The PKI Position

2. Since the 22nd Congress of the CPSU at which the Sino-Soviet conflict broke into the open, PKI statements and policies on a number of problems at issue between the Soviets and the Chinese Communists have paralleled the positions taken by the Chinese. These issues include questions both of methods to be followed within the international Communist movement and of Communist strategy. Some of the outstanding examples of this are:

A. The PKI has strongly criticized the CPSU tactic of an unheralded, unilateral attack upon the Albanian party, particularly in a milieu which exposed the dispute to the non-Communist world and the use of national party Congresses as a vehicle for attacks upon another party.

B. The PKI rejects the Soviet assumption of the right of the CPSU at its own Congresses to make and promulgate policy decisions binding on the whole movement.

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C. The PKI, while conceding the right of the CPSU to judge Stalin as a Russian Communist leader, reserves the right to form its own opinion of him as a leader of the international movement who performed great services for Communism.

D. On substantive issues the PKI has urged equal priority for national liberation and anti-imperialism with peace and disarmament, has joined in bitter denunciation of the Yugoslav revisionists and the renegade Tito and, like many parties, has accepted the Chinese explanation of the Sino-Indian border conflict. It has not joined in criticism of the Chinese use of military force in the border dispute nor in praise of the Soviet withdrawal in Cuba as a service to peace.

3. The principal area in which PKI views parallel those held by the Soviet Union is in the formulation of its own domestic program for its advance towards power. This program is one of legal, constitutional methods, based upon close cooperation with President Sukarno and the building of great mass support, both in the party itself and in a united front. This policy is currently under attack by a faction in the party which believes that it has outlived its usefulness and currently benefits Sukarno rather than Communism. It is expected to be the subject of sharp debate in the forthcoming PKI Ninth Congress.

The Internal Conflict in the PKI

4. The Aidit leadership of the PKI has been under attack by a faction within the party for some time. The sharpening of the Sino-Soviet dispute has exacerbated the internal conflict and the nature of the issues involved has given the dissidents weapons to use against Aidit. The positions in support of the Chinese taken by the PKI as outlined above were apparently taken as a result of pressure from the dissidents upon Aidit who would probably have preferred to maintain a more neutral, if not actually pro-Soviet, stance. It is not clear to what extent internal conflict in the PKI is due to ideological convictions, differences over correct tactics, personal factors and power rivalries, or external pressures. Nor is it possible to assess precisely the relative strengths of factions, although it is clear that the dissidents are strong

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enough to force concessions from Aidit and to exert a strong influence upon policy. A clearer picture may emerge from the Ninth Congress.

Motives of the PKI

5. The increasing alignment of the PKI with the Chinese is the result of a variety of factors. To some extent, as just noted, it may be an opportunistic seizure by Aidit's rivals of the issues in the dispute as weapons to use against him in a struggle for the party leadership. A belief on the part of at least many PKI members that the CPC is destined to dominance over the international movement, at least in Asia, has probably also contributed. However, on many of the key issues of strategy such as national liberation, anti-imperialism, and Cuba, the PKI's own position as a mass party in a "newly liberated," underdeveloped country which still has associations with the capitalist world would naturally lead it to a position parallel to that of the Chinese Communists. As regards the internal organization of the international movement, the PKI, particularly as it is concerned with defending its own domestic position, would not want to endorse the claim of the CPSU to dictate policy to other parties. On this point it is probable that Aidit and the dissident faction are in agreement.

6. A factor which may restrain, at least to a limited degree, the pro-Chinese faction in the PKI from forcing a very sharp turn to the left in the PKI domestic program is the relationship between the party and Sukarno. Such a turn, if it involved a direct confrontation between the PKI and the president, would entail the danger of provoking repressive measures from Sukarno with the support of the army. We may expect, then, that even should the dissident faction succeed in establishing a position of complete control, any moves toward a more militant, revolutionary program would be cautious and discreet.

7. One observer of the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) and its reaction to the Sino-Soviet dispute has stated that the PKI's "official stance can be described as one of non-alignment."* At the same time,

* Scalapino, Robert A. "Moscow, Peking and the Communist Parties of Asia" in Foreign Affairs Vol. 41, No. 2 p. 326.

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he points out, the actual PKI position on many of the important issues is "remarkably close to Peking." We believe that PKI positions on these issues are not determined primarily by its subservience to or coercion by either of the principals, although these may sometimes play a part in PKI decisions. They are rather the decisions of the party itself, influenced by a variety of factors including the party's position in its own country, internal strains and rivalries within the leadership, the party's own analysis of the issues, and perhaps its estimate of the probable winner in the dispute.

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